

*Byzantine Metal Stamps in
a North American Private Collection*

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UNTIL NOW THE INVESTIGATION and interpretation of Byzantine stamping implements has been neglected almost totally, although this field of study belongs broadly to sigillography, a discipline that is otherwise well advanced. This omission is somewhat surprising, since many more stamps or stamping implements than sealing implements (*boulloteria*) have been preserved.¹ Stamping implements were manufactured from several different materials: stone, clay, wood, and metal. Specimens made of stone or clay often have a simple design (ornaments or crosses), and only a few examples with inscriptions have survived (fig. 1);² wooden objects are rarely preserved, although wood was easy to handle (fig. 2).³ Metal stamps are the most important examples, because most bear inscriptions that often indicate the name of the owner, who was usually a trader or producer. These stamps contribute to both the prosopography of the Byzantine world and its economic history.

A comprehensive study based on a catalogue or corpus of objects is a desideratum. To date, specific aspects of stamping have been dealt with in a few publications, such as George Galavaris's book on bread stamps, which took an important step by examining the liturgical tradition of stamping, from its beginnings until now (see fig. 3, a modern stamp).⁴ A more general interpretation of stamping, however, one that includes administrative and fiscal aspects, has not been undertaken for the Byzantine period.⁵ In the early 1980s Gary Vikan and John Nesbitt produced a booklet on minor objects of Byzantine daily life,

1 Most of the material still remains unpublished in major collections such as the Menil Foundation Collection (Houston, Texas), or the Museum der Brotkultur (Ulm, Germany). The total number of preserved objects is about 500 items (as of 2005). For two examples of *boulloteria* see G. Zacos and A. Vegler, *Byzantine Lead Seals* (Basel 1972), 1, pl. 1–4; for another example see D. Feissel and others, *Trois donations byzantines au Cabinet des Médailles: Froehner (1925), Schlumberger (1929), Zacos (1998)* (Paris, 2001), no. 29.

2 M. von Falck and others, eds., *Ägypten, Schätze aus dem Wüstensand: Kunst und Architektur der Christen am Nil; Katalog zur Ausstellung* (Wiesbaden, 1996), nos. 163–68.

3 For Coptic wooden stamps see *ibid.*, nos. 171–76; a couple of wooden stamps dating to the second and third centuries have been recently discussed: G. Nachtergaele, “Sceaux et timbres de bois d’Égypte,” *Chronique d’Égypte* 75 (2000): 153–67. Some of these simply fashioned stamps have dated inscriptions.

4 *Bread and the Liturgy: The Symbolism of Early Christian and Byzantine Bread Stamps* (Madison–London, 1970).

5 Ch. Bakirtzis, *Βυζαντινά τσουκαλόλαγγνα, Δημοσιεύματα του Αρχαιολογικού Δελτίου* 39, 2nd ed. (Athens, 2003), 82–84 (with fig. 23) gives a short, but comprehensive introduction.

and it included metal stamps.⁶ They argued for a mainly “utilitarian, commercial context in which these implements were used.”⁷ During the last two decades many Byzantine stamping implements have been exhibited and published (e.g., in Paris, London, Munich, New York) or auctioned off, but most of them still remain unpublished in museum collections (e.g., British Museum, London; Ashmolean Museum, Oxford).⁸ Because of the paucity of published stamps, the presentation of even small collections, such as that of Susanne Bennet, discussed below, may usefully contribute to both the history of stamping and to the history of daily (economic) life.

Remarks on the History of Stamping

Stamping, the marking of different kinds of objects, was a practice common to all ancient cultures, and so has a lengthy history.⁹ Early stamps from Mesopotamia suggest a highly developed administrative system.¹⁰ Stamping was not restricted to the Fertile Crescent, however, for hundreds of stamping implements have been found in the Balkans as well. These stone or clay objects, often simply fashioned, can be dated to the second millennium before Christ; the need for marking and labeling products, to express ownership with or without religious connotations (through symbols or mythic formulas), is apparent.¹¹

Classical and Hellenistic ceramics sometimes bear impressions of stamps. Several publications classify hundreds of stamped amphora handles. Most of these stamps name the producer or trader of wine or other products. There is much evidence from the Hellenistic period for these marked containers, possibly indicating that in that period demand for products from the Mediterranean basin increased.¹² Wine



Fig. 1 Stamp made of clay (Bildarchiv Preußischer Kulturbesitz)



Fig. 2 A Coptic wooden bread stamp (Bildarchiv Preußischer Kulturbesitz)

⁶ *Security in Byzantium: Locking, Sealing, and Weighing* (Washington, DC, 1980); most of the “minor objects” in this publication belong to the Menil Foundation Collection (Houston), which had been acquired from George Zacos. This at least vaguely indicates the origin of the objects (Constantinople and its European and Asian hinterland).

⁷ *Ibid.*, 26; G. Vikan, “From Logos to Logo,” *BSCAbstr* 14 (1988): 11.

⁸ EXHIBITIONS AND PUBLICATIONS: K. Weitzmann (ed.), *Age of Spirituality: Late Antique and Early Christian Art, Third to Seventh Century* (New York, 1978), nos. 627–29; *Byzance: L'art byzantin dans les collections publiques françaises* (Paris, 1992), 310–11 (nos. 222–24); Feissel et al., *Trois donations byzantines*, nos. 5, 6, 7, 11 (n. 1 above); L. Wamser, ed., *Die Welt von Byzanz—Europas östliches Erbe: Glanz, Krisen und Fortleben einer*

tausendjährigen Kultur (Munich, 2004), 341 (nos. 721–27). AUCTIONS: *Antike und byzantinische Kleinkunst aus ausländischem und Münchener Privatbesitz: Glas, Keramik, Bronzen, Arbeiten in Stein, ägyptische Kleinfunde; Auktion in München in der Galerie Helbing, vom 28.–30. Oktober 1913* (Munich, 1913), nos. 1001–17; Frank Sternberg AG, *Auktion XXV am 25. und 26. November 1991 in Zürich* (Zürich, 1991), nos. 1176–81. MUSEUM COLLECTIONS: some are on display; some stamps of the British Museum are published in O. M. Dalton, *Catalogue of Early Christian Antiquities and Objects from the Christian East in the Department of British and Mediaeval Antiquities and Ethnography of the British Museum* (London, 1901), nos. 486–94, 982. The collection of Byzantine metal stamps kept at the Römisch-Germanisches

Zentralmuseum at Mainz (RGZM) will be published by the author.

⁹ D. Collon, ed., *7000 Years of Seals* (London, 1997).

¹⁰ See in general R. Gyselen and others, *Sceaux d'Orient et leur emploi*, *Res orientales* 10 (Bures-sur-Yvette, 1997).

¹¹ J. Makkay, *Early Stamp Seals in South-East Europe* (Budapest, 1984).

¹² E.g., N. Jefremow, *Die Amphorenstempel des hellenistischen Knidos, Quellen und Forschungen zur antiken Welt* 19 (Munich, 1995); G. Jöhrens, *Amphorenstempel im Nationalmuseum von Athen: Zu den von H. G. Lolling aufgenommenen “unedierten Henkelinschriften”* (Mainz, 1999); see now Y. Garlan, *Amphores et timbres amphoriques grecs entre érudition et idéologie*, *Mémoires de l'Académie des Inscriptions et Belles-Lettres*, n.s., 21 (Paris, 2000).

from Rhodes, for example, was shipped to distant ports, from the Red Sea to the Pillars of Hercules, indicating that it was much sought after. Some amphora stamps also indicate the name, type, and quality of the container's contents. Since a ship's cargo could include different kinds of products, these stamps would have helped distinguish one container from another. In Hellenistic times the stamps' impressions were positioned mostly on an amphora's handles. The vessels' upright position in storage allowed an easy and quick reading of the marks. This kind of loading did not change until Byzantine times, as seen in figure 5, the reconstruction of a Byzantine cargo ship.¹³

The marking continued in Roman times without any change in use or technology, until it was superseded by lead bullae and seals in the late Roman and early Byzantine period.¹⁴ A great number of Roman stamps bear names of individuals, and some even mention their profession.¹⁵ An example at the Museum der Brotkultur at Ulm (Germany), where objects connected to the fabrication and use of bread are collected, names, for example, a certain Clodius, who was a *mercator* (vendor).¹⁶

Besides playing a role in trade and commerce, stamping implements helped to meet the complex organizational demands of military administration. The provisioning of armies on campaigns was crucial for military success. The collection and distribution of processed foodstuffs or of live animals destined for consumption required trained persons with effective skills in storage, organization, and management. Lead seals found in regions along the empire's border (e.g., in cities along the Danube River hosting large Roman garrisons) may indicate the exchange of products for military purposes.¹⁷ The interpretation of these objects is difficult, however, because they bear inscriptions only in a few cases. Most of them show pictures, symbols, tiny portraits, or numbers. Nevertheless, routes of transport and the dissemination of goods can be reconstructed through amphora stamps.¹⁸



Fig. 3 A modern liturgical bread stamp (Serbian Orthodox Church, Vienna; collection of the author)



Fig. 4 A Byzantine brick stamp (private collection of Jonathan Bardill, neg. no. 969(h)[1])

13 See D. Papanikola-Bakirtzis and G. Skordali, "Archaeological Storerooms in the Museum of Byzantine Culture," *Museum of Byzantine Culture* 6 (1999): 56–59, presenting a model of a Byzantine cargo ship based on data from studies on Byzantine shipwrecks (especially on the ship found at Yassi Ada).

14 See J. W. Hayes, *Handbook of Mediterranean Roman Pottery* (London, 1997), 48–52, 82.

15 See e.g., E. Babelon and J.-A. Blanchet, *Catalogue des bronzes antiques de la Bibliothèque nationale* (Paris, 1895), 724–29.

16 Inv. no. O-4915 (unpublished).

17 H.-J. Leukel, *Römische Bleiplomben aus Trierer Funden*, Wissenschaftliche Reihe der Trierer Münzfreunde e.V. 3 (Trier, 1995); in this study Leukel tries to classify lead seals found in the river Rhine and to develop dating criteria.

18 E.g., J. Remesal Rodríguez, *Heeresversorgung und die wirtschaftlichen Beziehungen zwischen der Baetica und Germanien: Materialien zu einem Corpus der in Deutschland veröffentlichten Stempel auf Amphoren der Form Dressel 20*, Materialhefte zur Archäologie in Baden-Württemberg 42 (Stuttgart, 1997).

Besides food and fodder the Roman army required building material to erect camps and fortifications. It seems that each *legio* was responsible for producing its own material, especially bricks, which were marked with a stamp referring to a specific military unit.¹⁹ These brick stamps seem to have been control stamps to deter the use of the bricks for private building.

Classification of Stamps

In the Byzantine period stamping implements were widely used, even among Jewish communities;²⁰ just as in many other aspects of Byzantine daily life, in stamping practices cultural continuity with the classical world is evident. Nonetheless the complete classification and interpretation of Byzantine stamps still remains unaddressed by sigillographers.

Surviving Byzantine stamps are often classified as bread stamps and treated as liturgical or religious objects. However, such a use can be documented for only a few of them.²¹ The secular use of bread stamps is revealed in an example preserved by the destruction of Pompeii in 79 CE: in an excavated bakery the remains of carbonized bread bear the impression of a stamp; in fact, this, the only surviving ancient bread stamp, names its producer.²² No similar organic stamped remains have been preserved from later periods. Nevertheless marking bread or butter is common even today in rural regions of Europe.²³

Surviving Byzantine stamped objects are restricted to pottery (amphorae), bricks, and metalwork.²⁴ A late antique amphora (?) sherd discovered at Păcuilui Soare (Romania) bears three Greek letters (+ Ω H), that can be read as ζωή (“life”).²⁵ Amphorae continued to be stamped up to the middle Byzantine period.²⁶ Much evidence comes from shipwrecks, such as those discovered in the Sea of

19 H. Bloch, *The Roman Brick Stamps Not Published in Vol. XV, 1 of the Corpus Inscriptionum Latinarum* (Rome, 1967).

20 D. M. Friedenberg, “The Evolution and Uses of Jewish Byzantine Stamp Seals,” *The Journal of the Walters Art Gallery* 52–53 (1994–95): 1–21; Feissel et al., *Trois donations byzantines*, no. 6 (rectangular stamp depicting the menorah and Εὐθυμίου [= Εὐθυμίου, “of Euthymios”]; n. 1 above).

21 See G. Galavaris, “Brotstempel,” *RBK* 1:747–52; F. Eckstein and T. Klauser, “Brotstempel,” *RAC* 2:630–31.

22 Galavaris, *Bread and the Liturgy*, 27 (CELERIS Q GRANI / VERI SERV; n. 4 above); B. J. Mayeske, A Pompeian Bakery on the Via dell’Abbondanza, in *Studia*

Pompeiana et Classica in Honor of Wilhelmina F. Jashemski, vol. 1, *Pompeiana*, ed. R. I. Curtis (New Rochelle, N.Y. 1988), 149–65.

23 G. Benker, *Altes bäuerliches Holzgerät* (Munich, 1976), 116–17.

24 M. Grünbart and S. Lochner-Metaxas, “Stempel(n) in Byzanz,” in *Wiener Byzantinistik und Neogräzistik: Beiträge zum Symposium Vierzig Jahre Institut für Byzantinistik und Neogräzistik der Universität Wien im Gedenken an Herbert Hunger* (Wien, 4.–7. Dezember 2002), ed. W. Hörandner, J. Koder, and M. Stassinopoulou, *Byzantina et Neograeca Vindobonensia* 24 (Vienna, 2004), 177–89; K. Dark, *Byzantine Pottery* (Stroud, 2001), 104.

25 Vikan and Nesbitt, *Security in*

Byzantium, no. 66 (the reading of “+” as zeta is common in late antiquity and the solution Μιχαήλ is not satisfying).

26 A useful collection of essays mainly dealing with inscriptions and stamps on amphorae is *Mors’ka torgovlia v severnom prichernomor’e* [Sea trade in the north Black Sea region] (Kiev, 2001). See also C. Bakirtzis, “Byzantine Amphorae,” in *Recherches sur la céramique byzantine*, ed. V. Déroche and J.-M. Spieser, BCH Supplement 18 (Athens, 1989), 73–77; I. Barnea, “La céramique byzantine de Dobroudja (Xe–XIIIe siècles),” in the same volume, 131–42; and N. Günsenin, “Amphores byzantines dans le musées turcs,” in the same volume, 267–76.



Fig. 5 Amphorae stored in a replica of a Byzantine cargo ship, Museum of Byzantine Culture, Thessalonike

Marmara.²⁷ Many of the amphorae were wine containers. As in classical and Hellenistic stamping the impressions were set prominently on the shoulder or neck of the amphorae. Probably they served the same purpose as their ancient counterparts (see above).

The Roman tradition of stamping bricks lasted until the early Byzantine period. A corpus of Constantinopolitan brick stamps dating to the fifth and sixth centuries has been recently published, but no stamping implements corresponding to these impressions have yet been found, apparently because they were made of wood and only briefly used (fig. 4).²⁸

In addition to these objects of common manufacture, precious objects such as silver plates were also stamped with countermarks.²⁹

In general, stamping instruments can be divided into three major functions: liturgical, commercial, or simple utilitarian. “Bread stamp” is often used simplistically, to denote only a liturgical aspect. Such specificity bypasses any discussion of a stamp’s real function.³⁰ Liturgical stamps from late antiquity until today usually bear the same inscrip-

²⁷ N. Günsenin, “Medieval Trade in the Sea of Marmara: The Evidence of Shipwrecks,” in *Travel in the Byzantine World: Papers from the Thirty-fourth Spring Symposium of Byzantine Studies, Birmingham, April 2000*, ed. R. Macrides (Aldershot, 2002), 125–35.

²⁸ C. Mango, “Byzantine Brick Stamps,” *AJA* 50 (1950): 19–27; A. Kazhdan, “Bricks,” *ODB* 1:322–23; J. Bardill, *Brickstamps of Constantinople* (Oxford, 2004); I am grateful to Jonathan Bardill (Newcastle upon Tyne),

who provided me with a photograph from his collection of negatives; no. 969(h)[1] (fig. 4) is a brick stamp bearing the inscription Μεν(άλη)ς Ἐκκλ(ησίας) from Hagia Sophia at Istanbul.

²⁹ See E. Cruikshank Dodd, *Byzantine Silver Stamps*, DOS 7 (Washington, DC, 1961); S. A. Boyd and M. M. Mango, eds., *Ecclesiastical Silver Plate in Sixth-Century Byzantium: Papers of the Symposium Held May 16–18, 1986 at The Walters Art Gallery, Baltimore and Dumbarton Oaks, Washington,*

D.C. (Washington, D.C., 1993) in general and especially the articles there by M. M. Mango, “The Purpose and Places of Byzantine Silver Stamping,” 203–15, and J. Nesbitt, “Some Observations on Byzantine Control Stamps,” 225–27.

³⁰ G. Vikan clearly distinguished between bread stamps and commercial stamps in his entries in *ODB* 3:1942.

tion, the formula IC XC NIKA (Ἰησοῦς Χριστὸς νικᾷ / “Jesus Christ is victorious”).³¹

Those parts of the amphora that would illustrate the commercial use of stamps in daily life are for the most part no longer extant. When an amphora or a jar was opened, the stopper was removed and often discarded. Nevertheless several extant ancient jar stoppers made of clay or plaster show that some of them were marked by stamps.³²

Another commercial use for stamps was animal (or even slave) branding, a practice common in antiquity and later.³³ Several references in Byzantine written and pictorial sources are sufficient to reconstruct this process.³⁴ Imperial horses were branded and animals used in military campaigns carried marks of their owner.³⁵

Whereas the liturgical and commercial use of stamps is relatively easy to distinguish, the private, merely utilitarian function presents some difficulties. We do not know who was allowed to use a stamp and for what purpose a person used his or her name on a stamp. An inscription bearing a name can, for example, be interpreted as expressing the ownership of the said object.

The shapes of stamping implements are of a great variety: they can be triangular, rectangular, round, cross shaped, crescent shaped, shoe-sole or foot shaped, and there are rare examples of human- or

31 See Galavaris, *Bread and the Liturgy*, 100–102 (n. 4 above); R. Jurlaro, “Tre stampi eucaristici inediti in Brindisi,” *BollGrott* 15 (1961): 77–82; G. Galavaris and R. Hamann-MacLean, *Brotstempel aus der Prinz Johann Georg-Sammlung in Mainz*, Hefte des kunstgeschichtlichen Instituts der Universität Mainz 3 (Mainz, 1979); see now U. Peschlow, “Brotstempel,” §3.2 in *Sammler–Pilger–Wegbereiter: Die Sammlung des Prinzen Johann Georg von Sachsen*, ed. B. Heide and A. Thiel, Katalog zur Ausstellung herausgegeben vom Landesmuseum Mainz und dem Arbeitsbereich Christliche Archäologie und Byzantinische Kunstgeschichte am Institut für Kunstgeschichte der Johannes Gutenberg-Universität Mainz (Mainz, 2004), 131–35; N. Feig, “A Byzantine Bread Stamp from Tiberias,” *Lib.ann.* 44 (1994 [1995]): 591–94. For the tradition of stamping bread see G. H. Forsyth, “Island of Faith in the Sinai Wilderness,” *National Geographic* 125.1 (1964): 82–108, with illustrations on 88–89.

32 O. Wulff, *Altchristliche und mittelalterliche, byzantinische und italienische Bildwerke*, vol. 1, *Altchristliche Bildwerke* (Berlin, 1909), nos. 1455–63; Vikan and Nesbitt, *Security in Byzantium*, 14 (n. 6

above); von Falck et al., *Ägypten*, nos. 172–74 (n. 2 above; no. 172a: with a monogram of Paphnoutios; no. 172b bears the names of Markos and Demetrios).

33 C. P. Jones, “Stigma: Tattooing and Branding in Graeco-Roman Antiquity,” *JRS* 77 (1987): 139–55.

34 J. Haldon, ed., *Constantine Porphyrogenitus: Three Treatises on Imperial Military Expeditions; Introduction, Edition, Translation and Commentary*, CFHB 28 (Vienna, 1990), chaps. 78–79: “These 400 [i.e., mules and pack-horses] are then branded with the imperial seal on both sides to the forequarters”; W. Fink, “Bemerkungen zu Monogrammen auf einer spätantiken Inkrustationsplatte,” in *Lebendige Altertumswissenschaft: Festgabe zur Vollendung des 70. Lebensjahres von Hermann Vetters* (Vienna, 1985), 290–94; a further example is presented by D. Buckton, *Byzantium: Treasures of Byzantine Art and Culture from British Collections* (London, 1994), no. 55a (a Carthaginian mosaic depicting a Byzantine or Vandalic [aristocratic?] man on his horse with a cross-shaped mark on the back). On this horseman see recently P. von Rummel, “Habitus Vandalorum? Zur

Frage nach einer gruppenspezifischen Kleidung der Vandalen in Nordafrika,” *Antiquité tardive* 10 (2002): 131–41.

35 A branding iron defined by its form and manufacture was presented by S. Bendall and C. Morrisson, “Protecting Horses in Byzantium: A Bronze Plaque from the Armamenton, a Branding Iron and a Horse Brass,” in *Βυζάντιο, κράτος και οικονομία: Μνήμη Νίκου Οικονομίδου*, ed. A. Abramea, A. Laiou, and E. Chrysos (Athens, 2003), 31–49. The stamp of a Georgios *logothetes* seems to be a branding iron, as well; see J. Nesbitt, ed., *Byzantium: The Light in the Age of Darkness; November 2, 1988 through January 31, 1989, Ariadne Galleries, New York* (New York, 1988), no. 97. On ancient branding irons from Bulgaria see now A. Minchev, “Antichni zhelezni uredi za signirane ot Bŭlgariia Klasifikatsiia i interpretatsiia” [Ancient branding-irons from Bulgaria: Typology and interpretation], *Bulletin du Musée National de Varna* 36–37 [51–52] (2000–2001): 64–104 (English summary at 103–4).

amphora-shaped implements.³⁶ Even some examples of wheel stamps are preserved, but their function is not clear.³⁷ This variety of forms disappeared after the early Byzantine period and metal stamps became limited to round, crescent, and rectangular shape. Many middle Byzantine stamps are round (e.g., fig. 6) and of lighter manufacture.³⁸ Classifying them by their shape contributes little to interpreting their function.³⁹ Nonetheless the shape should be recorded in descriptions.

Most of the items have or had handles, which were necessary to permit their removal from the impressed material. Holes on the flat surface of the stamp allowed the air to escape during the process of stamping.⁴⁰

Since in general metal stamps bear inscriptions, a classification according to the texts is advisable, since it opens possibilities for their further interpretation. The inscriptions on Byzantine stamps can be divided into three major groups:

1. Single words, like *ἀθανασία* (“immortality”), *δύναμις* (“power”), *ζωή* (“life”), or *ύγια* (“health”).⁴¹ This group seems to be the largest, and most examples can be dated to the late antique or early Byzantine period.

2. Some stamps provide legends with more words or even quotations from the Bible: *εἰς θεός* (“one God,” cf. Mark 2:7; Luke 18:19), *Θεοῦ χάρις* (“God’s grace”), *καρποὶ Διός* (“fruits of Zeus”), *ζωὴ πᾶσι* or *ζωὴν*

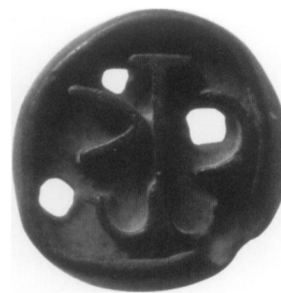


Fig. 6 A middle Byzantine amphora stamp bearing the monogram of Constantine (private collection, Vienna)

36 TRIANGULAR: S. D. Campbell, *The Malcove Collection: A Catalogue of the Objects in the Lillian Malcove Collection of the University of Toronto* (Toronto, 1985), no. 77 (Θωμά, “of Thomas”). RECTANGULAR: E.g., Vikan-Nesbitt, *Security in Byzantium*, nos. 60 (block monogram) and 65 (πιθοῦ κλεῖς, “pithos [jug] key”), and Collection Bennet nos. 1 and 4 (see catalogue, below). ROUND: E.g., N. I. Giannopoulos, “Βυζαντινὰ σφραγίδες ἀνέκδοτοι προερχομένοι ἐκ τῆς ἐπαρχίας Ἀλμυροῦ,” *BZ* 18 (1909): 502–10 (Ὀνησίμου; “of Onesimos”); *Byzance*, no. 222 (n. 8 above); Ἰωάννου τοῦ Καβάλου, “of John Kabalos”; and Feissel et al., *Trois donations byzantines*, no. 4 (n. 1 above; monogram). CROSS: *Byzanz, das Licht aus dem Osten: Kult und Alltag im Byzantinischen Reich vom 4. bis 15. Jahrhundert; Katalog der Ausstellung im Erzbischöflichen Diözesanmuseum Paderborn, Paderborn 2001* (Mainz, 2001), 235 (III.5: Ἐμμανουήλ, “of Emmanouel”), and Collection Bennet no. 6 (see catalogue, below). CRESCENT: M. Grünbart, “Stempel in Mondsichelform: Ein Beitrag zur frühbyzantinischen Stempelkunde,” *Tyche* 9 (1994): 41–49. FOOT OR SOLE: Vikan and Nesbitt, *Security in Byzantium*, no. 62

(Μελίτωνος, “of Meliton”), nos. 64 (Ἡμερίου, “of Hemerios”) and 67 (MHX [=Μιχαήλ] “of Michael”; n. 6 above). AMPHORA: *ibid.*, no. 63 (Θεοδώρου, “of Theodore”).

37 *Byzantine Art, an European Art: Zappeion Exhibition Hall, Athens, 1964* (Athens, 1964), no. 530 (with ill.; ΧΡΙΣΜΑ ΘΕΟΦΟΡΙΑΔΟΣ; Θεόφορος could be a female name, cf. E. Cougny, *Epigrammatum anthologia Palatina cum Planudeis et appendice nova* 3 [Paris, 1890], no. 348, line 5: μητρὸς σεμνοτάτης Νικηφόριδος γένος ἐσθλόν); L. Popović and others, *Antička bronza u Jugoslaviji* (Belgrad, 1969), 157, no. 342 (from Stobi); R. Noll, “Frühbyzantinische Bronzestempel mit Inschriften aus Ephesos,” in *Lebendige Altertumswissenschaft*, 318–21 (no. 1—ὁ θεὸς δὸς χάριν Σεργίῳ, “God give grace to Sergios”—with fig. 39; n. 34 above); British Museum, *Guide to the Exhibition Illustrating Greek and Roman Life* (London, 1929), 186 (fig. 205: Ἀλεξάνδρου, “of Alexandros”).

38 See C. Bakirtzis in *The Glory of Byzantium: Art and Culture of the Middle Byzantine Era AD 843–1261*, ed. H. C. Evans and W. D. Wixom (New York, 1997), no. 179 (a round metal stamp with the monogram of

John); M. Grünbart, “Zum Monogramm der mittelbyzantinischen Zeit,” *JÖB* 52 (2002): 243–48 (a round bronze stamp with the monogram of Constantine, see fig. 6); E. A. Parshina, “Kleimennaia vizantiiskaia amfora X v. iz Laspi” [Stamped Byzantine amphora of the tenth century CE from Laspi], in *Mors’ka torgovlia*, 104–17, esp. 112–15 (n. 26 above), tries to establish the chronological order of these impressions.

39 Grünbart, “Stempel in Mondsichelform” (n. 36 above).

40 C. Bakirtzis in Evans and Wixom, *Glory of Byzantium*, 180 (no. 179); Bakirtzis, *Βυζαντινά τσουκαλολάγνα*, 82–85 (n. 5 above).

41 IMMORTALITY: Weitzmann, *Age of Spirituality*, no. 628 (n. 8 above); Galavaris, *Bread and the Liturgy*, 164 with ill. (n. 4 above). POWER: Campbell, *The Malcove Collection*, no. 75 (cruciform; n. 36 above). LIFE: Vikan and Nesbitt, *Security in Byzantium*, no. 66 (shoe-sole); *The William Subjack Collection of Merovingian Coins: Ancient, Mediaeval and Modern Coins and Medals; 4th September 1998*, Nummorum Auctiones 13 (London, 1998), no. 1373 (shoe-sole). HEALTH: Campbell, *The Malcove Collection*, no. 78 (crescent).

πᾶσιν (“[he giveth] life to all”; cf. Acts 17:25), ζωὴ ὑγία (“life and health”), or Χρίστε βοήθει (“Christ, help!”);⁴² a few legends refer directly to their use for sealing transport containers: εὖ πῖε (“drink well”), οἶνος χρηστὸς πῖε (“excellent wine, drink it”), or πῖθου κλείς (“bar of a pithos”).⁴³

3. The third category includes names or monograms such as Θωμᾶ (“of Thomas”) or Ἰωάννου (“of John”).⁴⁴ A rare example with two names can be found in the Bennet Collection (see cat. no. 6, below). In the middle Byzantine period we find more complex inscriptions providing the name, the profession, or the rank of a stamp’s owner: Καλοκύρου πρωτοσπαθαρίου (“of Kalokyros *protospatharios*”; fig. 7).⁴⁵ Often they are similar to legends on seals: Κύριε βοήθει Στέφανον βασιλικὸν πρωτοσπαθάριον (“O lord, help Stephanos, the imperial *protospatharios*”), Κύριε βοήθει τῷ σῷ δούλῳ Μιχαὴλ πρωτονοταρίῳ (“O lord, help your servant, Michael the *protonotarios*”), or Κύριε βοήθει τῷ σῷ δούλῳ Νικήτα κουβουκλεισίῳ ἀμήν (“O lord, help your servant, Niketas the *kouboukleisios*, amen”).⁴⁶



Fig. 7 Stamp of the *protospatharios* Kalokyros (courtesy of the Bibliothèque nationale de France, Paris)

42 ONE GOD: *Antike und byzantinische Kleinkunst aus ausländischem und Münchener Privatbesitz: Glas, Keramik, Bronzen, Arbeiten in Stein, ägyptische Kleinfunde; Auktion in München in der Galerie Helbing, vom 28.–30. Oktober 1913* (Munich 1913), no. 1009 (shoe-sole); Weitzmann, *Age of Spirituality*, 628 (no. 565; round); *Khristiane na vostokeye: Iskustvo melkitov i inoslavnykh khristian* [Christians in the holy world: The art of the Melchites and other denominations of the Orthodox Church] (St. Petersburg, 1998), no. 20 (cross); L. Wamser and G. Zahlhaas, ed., *Rom und Byzanz: Archäologische Kostbarkeiten aus Bayern* (Munich, 1998), no. 172 (shoe-sole). GOD’S GRACE: Feissel et al., *Trois donations byzantines*, no. 7 (round; n. 1 above). FRUITS OF ZEUS: cat. no. 5 below; E. Dauterman Maguire, H. P. Maguire, and M. J. Duncan-Flowers, *Art and Holy Powers in the Early Christian House*, Illinois Byzantine Studies 2 (Urbana and Chicago, 1989), 14 (καρποί “fruits”; crescent-shape). LIFE TO ALL: Weitzmann, *Age of Spirituality*, 628 (no. 565); G. Manganaro, “Byzantina Siciliae,” *Minima epigraphica et papyrologica* 4 (2001): 131–78, 146. LIFE AND HEALTH: Wamser, *Welt von Byzanz*, no. 725 (cross; n. 8 above); Manganaro, “Byzantina Siciliae,” 147 (cross). CHRIST, HELP: Wamser, *Welt von Byzanz*, no. 721 (rectangular); Frank Sternberg AG,

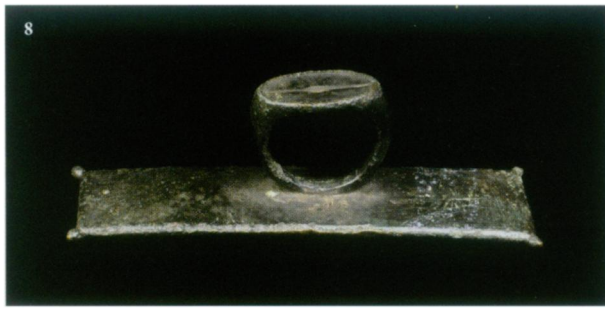
Auktion XXV, no. 1180 (round; n. 8 above); *Khristiane na vostokeye*, no. 21 (cross).

43 DRINK WELL: D. Zafropoulou, ed., *Συλλογή Γεωργίου Τσολοζίδη: Το Βυζάντιο με τη μάτια ενός συλλέκτη* (Athens, 2001), no. 119 = eadem, *L’approccio all’uomo bizantino attraverso l’occhio di un collezionista* (Athens, 2002), no. 94. EXCELLENT WINE: unpublished object exhibited at the Walters Arts Museum, Baltimore (Inv. 54.2838). BAR OF A PITHOS: Vikan and Nesbitt, *Security in Byzantium*, no. 65 (n. 6 above).

44 THOMAS: Campbell, *Malcove Collection*, no. 77 (triangular form; n. 36 above). JOHN: Vikan and Nesbitt, *Security in Byzantium*, 1.

45 *Byzance*, no. 224 (n. 8 above). I discuss these stamps in “Mittelbyzantinische Metallstempel,” in *Siegel und Siegler: Akten des 8. Internationalen Symposions für Byzantinische Sigillographie*, ed. C. Ludwig, Berliner Byzantinistische Studien 7 (Berlin, 2004), 93–102.

46 STEPHANOS: *Byzanz*, 235 (III.6; n. 36 above). MICHAEL: Gorny & Mosch, Giessener Münzhandlung, *Kunst der Antike* 124. *Auktion*, 27. Mai 2003 (Munich, 2003), no. 497. NIKETAS: J. W. Nesbitt, “A Mid-Byzantine Bronze Stamp in the Getty Museum,” *The J. Paul Getty Museum Journal* 11 (1983): 179–82.



Catalogue of Stamps in the Bennet Collection

Below are presented six stamps belonging to the private collection of Susanne Bennet. Almost all, numbers 2–6, can be dated to the late antique or early Byzantine period; number 1 is of Roman manufacture. All the stamps have intact handles; no airholes are drilled into the plate.

Numbers 2–5 of the following catalogue bear simple one- or two-word inscriptions, as in the first two of the three classifications discussed above. The remaining two stamps (nos. 1, 6) differ from the first four, but are nevertheless interesting and unique.

The original function of these stamps cannot be determined with certainty. Due to their durable manufacture numbers 2–5 were possibly used repeatedly, since their generic inscriptions (no mention of personal names, ranks, titles, or professions) are not restricted to specific individuals or specific times. For example, a stamp bearing the inscription ΖΩΗ (“life”) could be used by anyone in any period.

A Roman Stamp

1. Rectangular stamp of Titus Pros() Pam() (figs. 8–9)

94 × 27 mm; height of handle: 23 mm; weight: 62.05 g

T · PROS · PAMP T(itus) Pros() Pam()

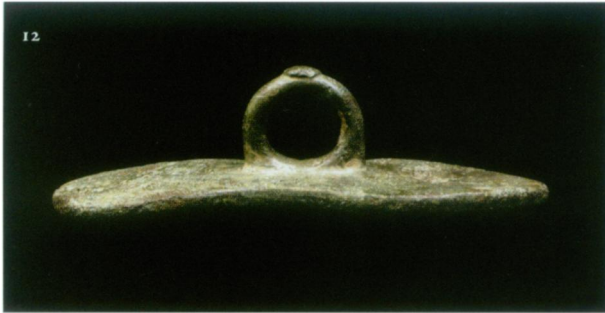
Possible solutions for the nomen gentile abbreviated as “Pros” are Prosidius, Prosius, Prosodius, or Prostinius;⁴⁷ for the cognomen, Pampeius, Pampineus, Pampinianus, Pampinus, Pamphilus, Pamphilus, or Pamphylus; but no person with the combination of these three names is recorded.⁴⁸ At the beginning and the end of the inscription grapes are depicted; this allows the suggestion that its owner was a wine merchant or winegrower.

⁴⁷ H. Solin and O. Salomies, *Repertorium nominum gentilium et cognominum Latinorum* (Hildesheim, 1988), s.v.

⁴⁸ B. Lörincz, *Onomasticon provinciarum Europae Latinarum* (Vienna, 2000), 3: s.v.;

I. Kajanto, *The Latin Cognomina* (Rome, 1982), s.v.

Figs. 8–9 Rectangular stamp T(itus) Pros() Pam() (cat. no. 1; this and all photographs of objects in Susanne Bennet’s collection by Dumbarton Oaks)



Stamping Implements with Greek Inscriptions

2. Sole-shaped stamp inscribed “Good luck” / “prosperity” or “be prosperous” / “have success” (figs. 10–11)

107 mm × 36 mm; height of handle: 28 mm; weight: 114.01 g

ΕΥΤΥΧΙΑ εὐτυχίῃ or εὐτυχί(α)

Sole- or shoe-shaped forms were common ever since antiquity.⁴⁹ No. 2 is a rare example with εὐτυχία / εὐτυχίῃ. John Nesbitt published a stamp with the inscription εὐτυχίῃ βασιλεῦ (“Have success / be prosperous emperor” or “may the emperor prosper”).⁵⁰ Such acclamations of the emperor were common from the fourth century onward, and can be found painted or inscribed on various objects or public places.⁵¹

3. Sole-shaped stamp inscribed “Life—health” (figs. 12–13)

126 × 38 mm; height of handle: 26 mm; weight: 159.78 g

ΖΩΗ ΥΓΙΑ ζῶῃ ὑγία

The zeta of the inscription is retrograde (as on the following piece).

4. Rectangular stamp inscribed “Life—health” (figs. 14–15)

55 × 42 mm; height of handle: 25 mm; weight: 115.89 g

Figs. 10–11 Sole-shaped stamp bearing the inscription “Good luck” / “be prosperous” (cat. no. 2)

Figs. 12–13 Sole-shaped stamp bearing the inscription “Life—health” (cat. no. 3)

⁴⁹ K. M. D. Dunbabin, “*Ipsa deae vestigia...* Footprints Divine and Human on Graeco-Roman Monuments,” *Journal of Roman Archaeology* 3 (1990): 85–109; J. W. Hayes, *Handbook of Mediterranean Roman Pottery* (London, 1997), 49, 50, 52.

⁵⁰ *Byzantium*, no. 100 (n. 35 above).

⁵¹ C. Roueché, “Acclamations in the Later Roman Empire: New Evidence from Aphrodisias,” *JRS* 74 (1984): 181–99.



Figs. 14–15 Rectangular stamp bearing the inscription “Life–health” (cat. no. 4)

Fig. 16–17 Fruit-shaped (?) stamp bearing the inscription “Fruits of Zeus/God” (cat. no. 5)

† ZOH | ΥΓΙΑ ζωή υγία

Two specimens bearing the same inscription, but of different shape, are attested elsewhere.⁵²

5. Fruit-shaped (?) stamp inscribed “Fruits of Zeus/God” (figs. 16–17)

65 × 54 mm; height of handle: 14 mm; weight: 114.18 g; decorated with four palm leaves

Ι|Δ—Ο—C|ΚΑΡΠΟΙ|Ι καρποὶ Διός

The shape of this specimen is similar to a recently published stamp at an exhibition in Munich.⁵³ This stamp may have marked an amphora or a stopper closing a container filled with certain fruits. It was common to store and transport dried fruits in jars, because they could be sealed hermetically. Earthenware was effective against infestation and damage from insects and mice. A rectangular stamp in a Viennese private collection bears the same inscription, while a circular bronze stamp in the Berlin Museum reads *καρποὶ κυρίου*;⁵⁴ several stamping implements read only *καρποί*.⁵⁵

⁵² Manganaro, “Byzantina Siciliae,” 147 (n. 42 above); Wamser, *Welt von Byzanz*, no. 725 (n. 8 above; both stamps are cross shaped).

⁵³ Wamser, *Welt von Byzanz*, no. 726 (Θεοῦ χαρά, “God’s joy”), see also a stamp in the Menil Collection published by Vikan

and Nesbitt, *Security in Byzantium*, 26 (no. 61; n. 6 above).

⁵⁴ Wulff, *Altchristliche Bildwerke*, no. 898 (n. 32 above).

⁵⁵ A couple of examples in the Menil Foundation Collection (unpublished); cf. Galavaris, *Bread and the Liturgy*, 46–47

(n. 4 above), arguing for a liturgical usage; a crescent-shaped stamp with this inscription is published in Dauterman Maguire, Maguire, and Duncan-Flowers, *Art and Holy Powers*, 14 (n. 42 above).



6. Cross-shaped stamp of Kalliopios and Pelagonia (figs. 18–19)

180 × 147 mm; height of handle: 52 mm; weight: 726.8 g

ΚΑΛΙΟΠΙΟΥ | ΚΕ | ΠΕΛΑΓ(ΟΝ)ΙΑΣ Καλ(λ)ιοπίου καὶ

Πελαγ(ον)ίας

This heavy specimen with a well-manufactured handle is a rare example of a stamp that names two persons.⁵⁶ The phenomenon of double names is known from sigillographic evidence, but the combination of a male and female name on a seal or stamp has not been documented until now.⁵⁷

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⁵⁶ An unpublished stamp in the Menil Foundation Collection bears the names of Malchos and Iubinos.

⁵⁷ J. Nesbitt, "Double Names on Early Byzantine Lead Seals," *DOP* 31 (1977): 109–21.

Figs. 18–19 Cross-shaped stamp of Kalliopios and Pelagonia (cat. no. 6)